

WINTER 2006
Vol. 4, No. 1

SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES

With little fanfare, but great expectations, Special Collections unveiled its new website at <http://specialcollections.lib.msu.edu> this past August. Visitors to the homepage will find the usual information about hours, rules, and location, but also many new additions, including a picture of a rarely seen empty reading room, a list of "Frequently Asked Questions," some familiar looking "Did You Knows," and a section, "Discover Special Collections," which features revolving pictures and descriptions of important titles and collections that help define Special Collections. Our banner above the webpage also changes from visit to visit, highlighting an item from one of our collections.

From the homepage one can find a "Materials" page where our most highly used collections are described, ranging from brief introductions to more detailed descriptions of research areas within each collection. Although still a work in progress, with new information added every month, researchers will be able to find enough to whet their appetite and, we hope, plan a trip to the reading room. Finally there is an ever-expanding "Links" page with important links to relevant websites from *Feeding America*, our early American cookbook website, to the Comic Art Collection homepage, to conservation tips for rare books. In the near future we will add a page devoted to recent acquisitions and gifts to keep our loyal friends up to date on the never ending work of building and maintaining our important collections. All in all, an attractive and, we think, informative overview of

our operations here—but you will be the best judge of that, of course! Let us know what you think, which is also possible from the new webpage.

Did you know...

♦ Bound and current issues of the *Lansing Labor News*, which began in 1945 and continues publishing today, were received as a gift to Special Collections from its publishers this past year. Serving as Lansing's voice of the United Auto Workers, the *News* provides a rich and unique source of information about labor news and events in what is now the largest auto producing city in the country. The holdings of the *News* in Special Collections are the most complete in the world.

♦ *De Proprietatibus Rerum* by Bartholomaeus Anglicus was written in the 13th century and is considered the second encyclopedia ever issued. Special Collections holds two editions of the work: Anton Koberger's Nuremberg edition of 1483, and the 1535 edition translated by John Trevisa and printed in London by Thomas Berthelet.

This Special Collections home page (lower right) celebrates the MSU Libraries' Comic Art Collection. Select "View Another Style" and the banner changes to highlight materials in our Rare Books Collection (lower left). Refresh your web browser to discover more, and share your comments—both are features of the new home page design.

Links
If you are interested in learning more about our materials or rare books, the following links may interest you.

Link Categories

- Digitized Collections
- Other SpC Related Sites
- Rare Book Resources
- Miscellaneous

Special Collections Materials Highlights
Learn More: Item Spotlight »

Special Collections contains over 450,000 printed works, numerous manuscript and archival collections, and an extensive collection of ephemera. Listed below are some of the highlights of our materials.

Please select a collection to view a description:

Africana	Gay, Lesbian Bi-sexual & Transgender
Agriculture	Literature
Changing Men	Manuscripts & Archives

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES
Home Materials Links

SPECIAL Collections

Location
Special Collections
Michigan State University
Libraries
100 Library
East Lansing
MI 48823
Phone:
517-432-6123 x100

Hours
During the Fall and Winter semesters when classes are in session, Special Collections is open for the following hours:
Mon - Fri: 9a to 5p
Sat: 12 noon to 4p
Please Note:
Special Collections will be closed for the Thanksgiving Holiday, November 24 - Sunday, November 27.
We will reopen Monday, November 28, 2005, at 9am.

View Another Style
The CSS (what?) for the Special Collections Website was designed to highlight many aspects of the collection. Each style sheet offers a different look and feel for the Special Collections website.

Select a style sheet to view a different style:

- True Comics CSS: A stylesheet inspired by the True Comics series - part of the Comic Book Collection.
- The Nuremberg Chronicle CSS: This stylesheet features images of *The Nuremberg Chronicle*.

Want to know more about the items in these style sheets?
To learn more about the Special Collection materials featured in these style sheets, please click the image the item at the top of the screen or see Item Spotlight.

Did you Know...
Shaping the Values of Youth was funded with a grant from the Library of Congress / American National Digital Library Competition in 1999.
The Natural History holdings in Special Collections includes a copy of Ulisse Aldrovandi's, *De animalibus* (Frankfurt, 1623), the earliest known full length work on insects.

Comments
Please tell us what you think about our website. Use the form below to submit your comments or questions. If you would like a reply, please include your email address.
If you have a question, you may also find our question or comment is regarding Special Collections, please contact Peter Berg. Thank you!
Your Name (optional):
Your E-mail Address (optional):
Submit Comments

Discover Special Collections
Special Collections holds the only known copy of *Shadows from the Walls of Death; Facts and Inferences prefacing a Book of Specimens of Arsenical Wall Papers* (Lansing, 1874) by Professor Robert C. Kedzie, a physician turned chemistry professor who for many years taught at Michigan Agricultural College. Appointed to the first State Board of Health for Michigan, Kedzie wrote of the deaths that resulted from wall paper tinted with arsenic (Paris green). The color gradually dusted off the walls, and one who lived in the house so papered might absorb enough to cause death. Kedzie cut up 80 rolls of wall paper containing the deadly arsenic-green and produced 100 copies for distribution to state libraries along with his scientific conclusions. Before long the use of arsenic to produce the greens in wall paper disappeared.
The copy in Special Collections has been conserved and the wall paper specimens encapsulated to protect staff and patrons.

<http://specialcollections.lib.msu.edu>

The Origins of the *Livres des Origines*

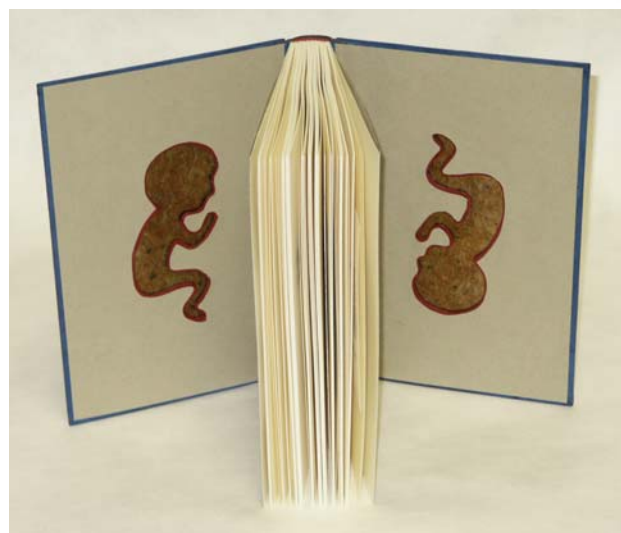
A Case Study in Bookbinding by Eric Alstrom, Collections Conservator

Every few years there is a major international bookbinding exhibition. I often enter these on my own, but this year offered a new twist on the theme: MSU Libraries' Special Collections asked me to bind an exhibition book offered by Les Amis de la Reliure d'Art, a book arts organization from Quebec, Canada. The book is called *Livres des Origines*, or the *Book of Origins* and was on exhibition in September at the Bibliothèque Gabrielle-Roy in Quebec City.

The *Book of Origins* is a fine-press book based on the creation myth of the Huron Indians, who live across eastern Canada and the northeastern United States. The text was written by André Ricard based on research conducted in the 1940s by the ethnologist Marius Barbeau. The text is translated in both English and French and both are mingled side-by-side on the page forming a unique typographic design. Four color lithographs by Carmelle Martineau (at right is *terre fertile*) are also included in the book.

When I bind a book such as this, I first do some research. I looked at various source materials on the Huron and Native Americans in general, focusing on the icons of their creation stories. As I was doing this research, my wife and I found out she was pregnant with twins. In what I view as not quite a coincidence, twins played a prominent role in almost all of these origin myths. Taking this as my cue, I designed my binding around this theme.

The book is bound in Sun Edvard's "simplified" binding style, a variation on the French binding tradition which is anything but simple. It is, however, an elegant structure for a volume of this size (approximately 8.5 x 5.5 inches). The endbands are maroon leather and the endsheets are grey Hahnemuelle Ingres paper. The boards are inlaid with pieces of mica cut out in the shape of babies, one on each cover. They are outlined in maroon leather with an umbilical cord connecting them together across the spine forming the letter "O", which then spells out the word "Origins" in both English and French. The boards are covered in pastepaper by Claire Maziarczyk and framed in blue leather. The spine is gray leather with blue and red leather onlays for the title. The slipcase continues this design on both the front and back of the box. —Eric Alstrom



Photos by Eric Alstrom.

Pamphlet Literature in the American Radicalism Collection

Somewhere between the westerns and romances of the Russel B. Nye Popular Culture Collection, and the first editions and slim volumes of poetry in the Rare Books Collection, lies the little-remembered world of pamphlet literature. Throughout the 20th century, pamphlets were a major stream of special purpose communication and were produced by all manner of businesses, churches, and civic organizations. Most of the examples in the Special Collections holdings come from labor unions and left-wing political organizations. Recent acquisitions from a donor in New York City and from the MSU Labor and Industrial Relations Library have increased our holdings by several hundred titles.



Zionism and the Arab Revolution. 31-page pamphlet

published in 1968 by the Young Socialist Alliance. Three essays on Israel.

The Communist Position on the Negro Question. 64-page pamphlet published in 1934 by the Communist Party of the U.S.A. Four essays and two convention resolutions

on the topic.

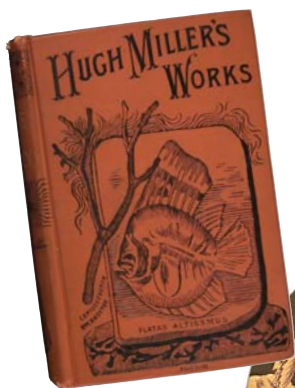
Curran, J. *Take the Helm.* 32-page pamphlet published in 1944 by the National Maritime Union, advocating political action by its members. W. Gropper, illustrator.

An old Library of Congress rule that no monograph with fewer than 50 pages should be cataloged did a lot to suppress the visibility of this stream of literature in academic circles, but we've made many exceptions to that rule in Special Collections. Cataloging of these items has been routine since the 1960s, but a big cataloging push began in 1990 with the online cataloging of the former "CPAVF" (Communist Party of America Vertical File). When the 1,000 or so pamphlets in this collection appeared in library computers around the world, InterLibrary Loan requests began to come in immediately, and they continue. No one can know how many pamphlets of this kind exist—each doing its best to convince someone of something important in 64 pages or less—but the variety and extent of our collection is already impressive, as the covers shown here will suggest. Sharing these materials in online catalogs is one of the major contributions of the American Radicalism Collection to the scholarly world. —Randy Scott

19th Century Cloth Bindings—Notable Collectables

Cloth has been used for book covers for centuries. During medieval times, cloth was the base for embroidered bindings, and in England in the 1770s, schoolbooks were bound in canvas. However, over the past decade, book collectors, rare book librarians, and book dealers have all been talking about 19th century cloth bindings. Suddenly it seems these are coming into their own as important and valuable examples of a unique period of book production and design.

The appearance of these often beautiful and highly collectible books is the result of the confluence of a number of factors, including the rise of the book-reading middle classes in England, the development of a suitable starch-filled cloth, the new method of 'casing in', and the development of industrial machinery that allowed the production of a new type of book case. Without a demand for inexpensive but attractive bindings, there would have been no need for further developing the old method of printing books sold in sheets to individuals to have bound in leather by their own hand binder. The middle class could not afford that luxury, but they could and did buy books bound less expensively in cloth. The starch-filled cloth was run through high pressure rollers to imprint decorative textures, and the range of starch colors provided yet another variation. Today, the majority of hardcover books are produced in a similar manner, though using thinner cloth and paper. But the height of clothbound books was clearly in the 19th century, where the variety of cloth and embellishments made what is now a very collectable genre of bindings.



The cruise of the Betsey... by Hugh Miller (Edinburgh, W. P. Nimmo, Hay, & Mitchell, 1889).



This detail of a strawberry plant from the cover of *The New Agriculture...* by A. N. Cole (New York, *The American Angler*, 1885) is imprinted with gold ink.

The Michigan State University Libraries have a rich collection of these, which can be viewed in person in Special Collections or via the web at <http://clothbound.lib.msu.edu/index.cfm> —Jeanne Drewes

[Source: Bookcloth 1823-1980 by William Tomlinson and Richard Masters, 1995.]

Westerns and the Perspective of “Special Collecting”

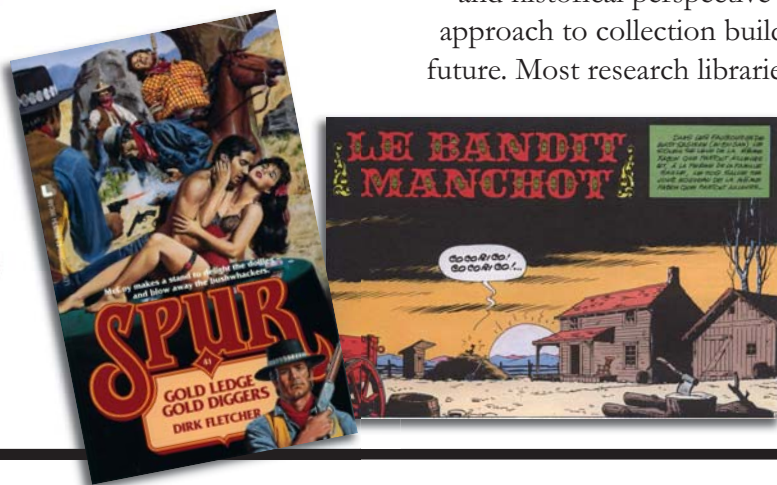
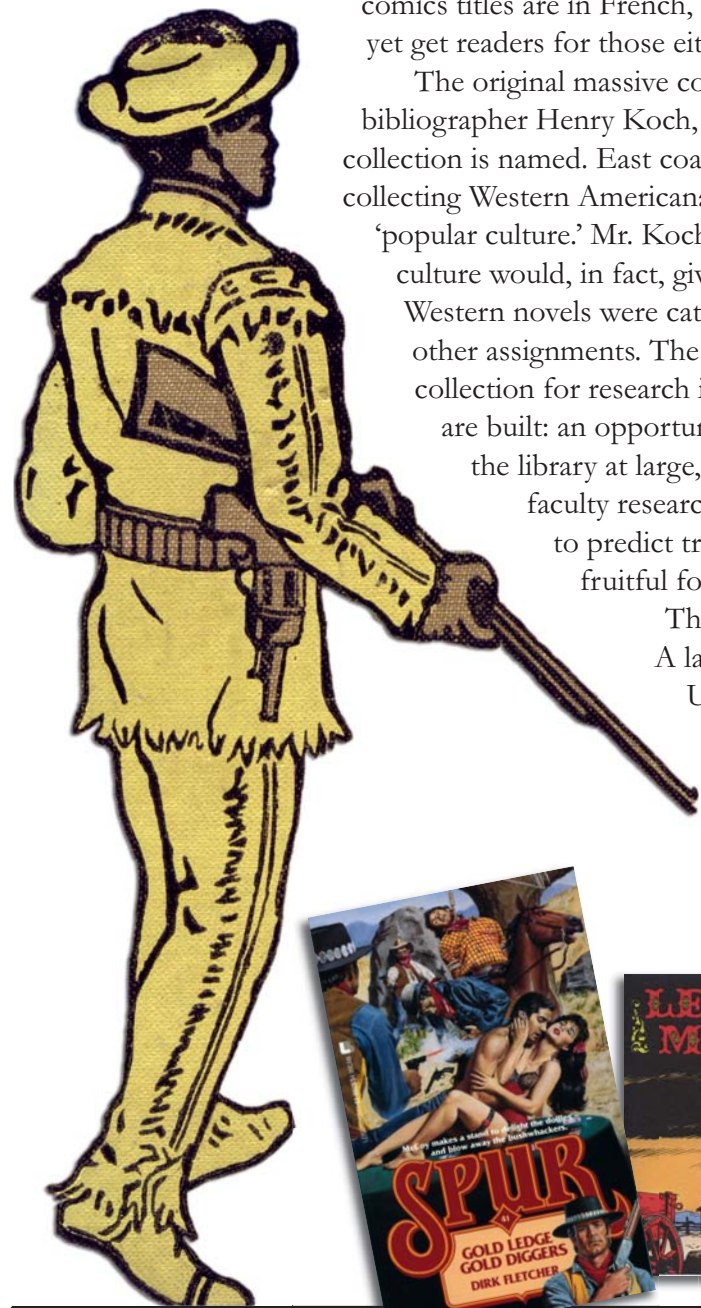
Five thousand western novels, mostly first edition hardcovers in dust jackets, have been part of the Russel B. Nye Popular Culture Collection since the early 1970s. Alas, they have rarely been used. Two years ago a donation of 1,000 “adult” paperback western novels was accepted. They await cataloging and thus, of course, have never been used. We have recently determined that a specialty of our European comic book collection will be “images of the New World in Old-World comics,” and that explains why four hundred of our one thousand western comics titles are in French, Spanish, German, Italian, Finnish, Danish, or Dutch. We don’t yet get readers for those either. What’s the story?

The original massive collection of western novels was purchased for the Libraries by bibliographer Henry Koch, in consultation with Russel Nye, for whom the Popular Culture collection is named. East coast universities like Harvard and Princeton had also begun collecting Western Americana, but their collections went out of the way not to be considered ‘popular culture.’ Mr. Koch realized, however, that our collecting strengths in popular culture would, in fact, give the collection a unique context. Soon after they arrived, the Western novels were cataloged by Leonard Cluley, who had to squeeze them in between other assignments. The efforts of these two men, who acquired and organized a major collection for research in Western fiction, exemplify the way unique scholarly resources are built: an opportunity, a vision, and hard work. Unlike the collecting model used for the library at large, in which subject areas are strengthened based on curricular and faculty research needs, part of the mission of a special collections division is to predict trends and acquire materials that, in our judgment, are potentially fruitful for researchers and which we believe will be studied in the future.

Thirty years is not too long to wait, if a collection is truly unique. A lapse in the publishing and popularity of western fiction in the United States—which is happening now—means that scholars are being offered a chance for perspective. Cultural perspective is what the European-produced comics so currently visible in Continental bookstores now offer American scholars, and historical perspective is what the Special Collections approach to collection building can offer the scholars of the future. Most research libraries have not maintained significant

collections of the western popular novel, and no other library has combined these materials with a similarly rich collection of western comics from America and Europe. It seems unlikely that we will have to wait another hundred years for this collection to come into its own, but even if that is the case, 200-year-old books are not particularly old—on the shelves of Special Collections!

—Randy Scott



Rifleman detail from cover illustration of a reprint of *The Rifle Rangers*, by Mayne Reid, first published in 1853. “A thrilling story of daring adventures and hairbreadth escapes during the Mexican War.” This book is quoted in Russel Nye’s chapter in *westerns* in his *The Unembarrassed Muse* (Dial Press, 1970).

Cover of *Gold Ledge Gold Diggers*, by Dirk Fletcher (Leisure Books, 1994). Part of a collection which the donor called “adult westerns.”

Panel from *Lucky Luke: Le Bandit Manchot* (“The One Armed Bandit”), 1981. *The Wild West of Lucky Luke* (by Maurice De Bèvere and Bob De Groot) includes *Michigan*. Please note the sunrise over the mountains of East Saginaw....